

## A MOAI IN MICHELANGELO MARBLE

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A *moai* of Michelangelo Carrara marble carved by Rapanui artist Bene Tuki stands in Venice.

In early 2004, an agreement was signed between the Italian Marenostrum Foundation (whose President is Orlando Pandolfi) and the Rapa Nui Mana Henua Ote Ao Corporation (President, Edgard Hereveri) for a series of joint activities leading to cultural and artistic exchanges, development strategies, and education and training. I am myself Honorary President of the Rapa Nui Corporation and Director of the Scientific Council of Marenostrum.

Field activities and cultural exchanges took place in May and August 2004 in Rapa Nui, and in August and September 2004 in Italy (Venice, Carrara, Palmaria and Porto Venere). A book is in press (*Empowerment. From Rapa Nui the Navel, to Wherever in the World*) describing all these activities and their projections, including implications for small islands development. The title of the Italian version of the book is *Empowerment. Da Rapa Nui, l'Ombelico della Terra, a Ovunque nel Mondo*.

I will refer here only to the sculpture in Carrara of a *moai*, as well as of the Te Pito te Henua with the surrounding

stones, made with the most prestigious and expensive marble in the world. Carrara marble comes from the Michelangelo marble quarry, active since Roman times and from which Michelangelo himself selected and extracted the material for his *chef-d'œuvres* (David, Moses, La Pietà, etc.).



The Rapa Nui corner (with *moai* and Te Pito te Henua) in the Venice Lido during the International Cine Festival.

Photo: F. Centenari.



Bene Tuki in the workshop of the Michelangelo marble quarry in Carrara, Italy. Photo: Marenostrum.

The owner of the Michelangelo marble quarry and of several other quarries in the world, Franco Barattini, assumed all expenses, including the travel of two Italian artists to Rapa Nui (he himself traveled to Rapa Nui), all the marble required, the facilities of his large international workshop where sculptors from around the world are constantly interacting, and transport of the *moai* from Carrara to Venice. He supported also the travel and expenses from Rapa Nui to Italy for Bene Tuki, who is the creator of the work, with some support of two internationally known Italian artists, Luciano Massari and Marco Nereo Rotelli. This was an unprecedented working experience for Bene Tuki.

The *moai* was exhibited during the International Cine Festival of Venice in September 2004. For those who have never attended an International Cine Festival, such as at Venice and Cannes, it is difficult to imagine the luxury and so-



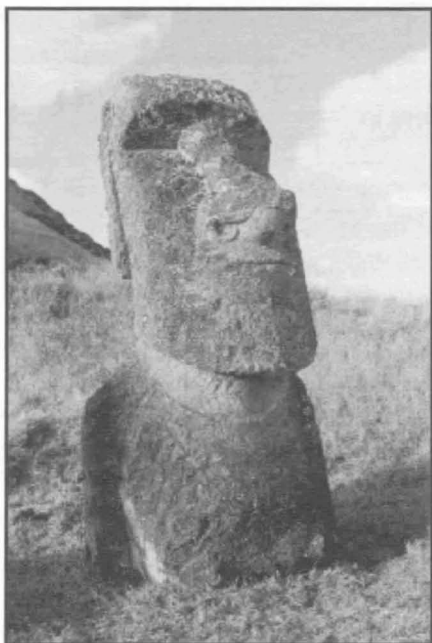
The Rapa Nui corner (with *moai* and Te Pito te Henua) in the Venice Lido during the International Cine Festival. Photo F. Centenari.

phistication of events, and the high concentration of world media. The *moai* represented one of the main attractions (among others, the Matato'a dancing group of Rapanui was also invited), and was extensively covered by the media. Many social events of the cinema stars took place nearby the *moai* in the Lido of Venice.

There are no doubts that the visibility and the attractiveness of Rapa Nui for tourism have increased considerably. In addition, the aspirations of a number of Rapanui, including Edgard Hereveri, is that the Rapanui culture acquires an international value. This is empowerment. Furthermore, as it is made of Carrara marble, this is a *moai* "for eternity".

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280 pp.; soft bound; ISBN1-880636-17-4  
Published by the Easter Island Foundation  
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